Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 16, 2014

MG Robert M. Worley II, USAF (Ret.)
Director, Education Service
Veterans Benefit Administration
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear MG Worley,

We are writing to inquire about the recent suspension by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of the enrollment certifications for VA students recently accepted into Yavapai College's (the College) Airline and Helicopter Operations concentration, which is located in Prescott, Arizona.

In March of this year, Yavapai College sent acceptance letters to over 30 students, mostly veterans, into their aviation programs. Following their acceptance, the VA sent the College a letter dated March 24, 2015, which ordered the College to suspend "enrollment certifications for VA students not already enrolled" in two of its aviation concentration options due to compliance issues with 38 CFR 21.4201, otherwise known as the 85-15 rule. It is our understanding that this was the first time the College was informed that the VA would be separating the College's Airline Operations and Helicopter Operations concentrations from the other aviation concentrations to determine compliance with the 85-15 rule, which has led to this compliance issue.

As of today, Yavapai College is prohibited from enrolling any new veteran students into the aviation program, and the fate of current enrollees and those recently accepted to that program is unclear.

Recent attention to these issues has brought to light potential problems with the current structure of aviation programs for veterans under the GI Bill. We support a thorough review by Congress and the VA to ensure that abuses of the GI Bill are brought to an end.

We understand and appreciate the VA's duty to ensure that all programs remain compliant with the 85-15 rule, but we feel that these recent actions may negatively affect a number of veterans who have already moved to the Prescott area based on their acceptance to this program—some of which may have used their own funds to make a move, and others who may have used their one-time Department of Defense-sponsored move after discharge from the armed services. Further,

we feel that forcing current enrollees to suspend or terminate their current curriculum is unreasonable both to the students themselves and to the taxpayers who have already invested in the education of many of those students.

We ask that the VA provide clarification on how this suspension applies to students recently accepted, but not yet enrolled, to these programs. Further, we ask that the VA provide us with reasoning for the actions taken to suspend the VA certification for the aviation program at Yavapai College. Finally, we ask that the VA clarify how its suspension applies to current enrollees in each of the aviation concentrations offered by the College. As you are likely aware, this is a timely issue, as there are 30 prospective students who are now left in the lurch in the lead-up to the academic term beginning May 11, 2015.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request. As always, we ask that this matter be handled in strict accordance to existing law, rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our offices. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator

Paul A. Gosar
Member of Congress